

VIRTUAL MEETING
RAILS BOARD ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 9, 2023 | 4:00 p.m.
125 Tower Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Robin Helenthal, Advocacy Committee chairperson, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Helenthal read the following statement: In accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Proclamation, the RAILS Board of Directors finds an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent and believes it is in the best interest of RAILS to hold a virtual meeting to perform essential business.

2. Roll Call of Members

Goyer called the roll of Committee members.
Zoom/Telephone: Monica Caldicott, Alice Creason, Juanita Harrell, Robin Helenthal, Sarah McHone-Chase, Thomas Stagg, Amy Walsh
Absent: Kara Thorstenson

3. Recognition of Guests and Announcements

Guests in attendance at RAILS Burr Ridge: Karen Goyer (minute taker), Monica Harris (*ex-officio*)
Guests in attendance via Zoom: Ryan Hebel, Mary Witt (*ex-officio*)

Harris announced Harrell has been named Executive Director of LaGrange Park Public Library and has agreed to continue to be a member of the RAILS Advocacy Committee as a public library representative.

4. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1. Adoption of the Agenda

5.2. Approval of the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee Minutes of February 9, 2023

Caldicott moved for the approval of the consent agenda. Creason seconded, and a roll call vote was taken: Ayes: Monica Caldicott, Alice Creason, Juanita Harrell, Robin Helenthal, Sarah McHone-Chase, Thomas Stagg, Amy Walsh. Nays: none.

6. New Business

6.1. Materials Challenges Overview

Harris gave an overview of materials challenges issues including data, talking points, and efforts. The ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom reported 67 materials challenges in Illinois in 2022, an increase over 41 reported in 2021, however, many challenges are not reported. Groups attempting to ban materials are small but vocal and organized.

Among the data from a 2022 ALA (American Library Association) poll, 71% of voters oppose banning books, 90% of voters have a high regard for public and school librarians. A majority of voters from political parties (89% of all voters, 95% of Democrats, 78% of Independents, 87% of Republicans) say public libraries play an important role in the communities. Nearly the same results were found when asked if school libraries play an important role.

Secretary Giannoulas has drafted a first-in-the-nation legislation, HB2789. Under this bill, Illinois libraries would only be eligible for state funded grants (for public and school libraries), if they demonstrate that they adhere to the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights indicating reading materials should not be removed or restricted because of partisan or personal disapproval; or issue a statement complying with the policies of the State Library or one prohibiting the practice of banning books or resources.

A Rapid Response Model for Illinois libraries, based on a model developed in New Jersey, is being developed in partnership with AISLE, ILA, IHLS, and RAILS. The model will create a volunteer network that can respond to urgent requests for support against materials challenges. Talking points and toolkits are available from organizations such as ALA, Freedom to Read Foundation, Pen America and United Against Book Bans.

An open discussion on materials challenges followed. New laws banning materials are being written in other states. Some laws say librarians can be charged with a crime. In the Antioch High School and Community Lakes High School in Illinois, a police officer confronted the school librarian in front of students. Caldicott explained Community High School District 128's approach to materials challenges is to limit the scope of who can submit a materials challenge to only residents in the school district. Their materials selection policy states a challenge cannot be filed if it goes against the school board EDI policy. A materials challenge is called a Statement of Concern and requires the filer to sign and attest they have read 100% of the material of concern.

Stagg reported the ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee and Trustee Forum will present on materials challenges at Trustee Day at the ILA conference.

6.2. Expiration of Remote Meeting Authorization

Beginning with the June Advocacy committee meeting, the meeting rules will change to require members to meet at a RAILS facility or in a publicly accessible location with the agenda posted at the location in advance. The members agreed the current meeting days and time are the best time to meet. Due to the current climate, the great need for advocacy, and to stay on top of issues, members recommended to continue to meet monthly.

7. Unfinished Business

7.1. Legislative and Advocacy Update

Harris reported the ILA Advocacy Committee discussed feedback on the legislative meetup and Library 101 training. The Fly-In Event is taking place today. The Public Policy Committee will focus on bill in three categories: FOIA and OMA, which includes a bill that would allow those with childcare issues to attend meetings remotely; First Amendment issues and amendments to [HB2789](#); and the budget and unfunded mandates. More details will be available at the end of March on the bills that remain standing. It is recommended to fill out a witness slip to support HB2789. The House bills being watched by AISLE are numbers HB2789, [HB1107](#), and [HB1481](#).

There was discussion on the possibility that HB2789 will cause divisiveness or a desire to defund libraries. After the Secretary of State's budget is released more will be known about the status of the statewide online database.

The committee members discussed public library boards working to cut library services. One example is the Elmwood Park Public Library which had 9 full time MLIS certified staff in 2021 but now it has been reported as only having one part-time MLIS staff member. The library was the subject of an article in [Book Riot](#). It was noted that professional standards are not a requirement for a library to receive state funding.

7.2. Library Issues Updates

Creason stated that Open Educational Resources (OER) is an ongoing concern in academic libraries. Walsh reported that the AISLE (Association of Illinois School Educators) retired librarian project is live. Librarians who retire can notify AISLE using an online form. A letter will be sent to the school district with an offer to post the job opening to AISLE members. The letter also explains the impact of a certified school librarian. RAILS will be copied on the letters emailed to school districts.

8. Agenda Building for the Next RAILS Board Advocacy Committee Meeting

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held on April 13, 2023 at 4:00 pm. The tentative agenda items are Specialized Libraries and the Legislative and Advocacy update.

9. Adjournment

Helenthal adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.